

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. In a relationship between a telecommunication provider and a plurality
2 of subscribers, a device for determining an appropriate set of addresses to which to distribute
3 an alert, the device comprising:
4 at least one interface member in communication with a communication
5 network;
6 a processor in communication with the at least one interface member; and
7 a storage medium in communication with the processor, the storage medium
8 comprising instructions executable by the processor to:
9 maintain a directory of alert gateways, the directory comprising a
10 plurality of directory entries, each directory entry being associated with a particular
11 alert gateway and comprising at least one gateway characteristic associated with that
12 alert gateway, the gateway characteristic including information to enable the alert
13 distribution device to determine whether a given alert should be transmitted to the
14 alert gateway;
15 maintain a distribution address associated with each of the alert
16 gateways, the distribution address for a particular alert gateway providing sufficient
17 identifying information about that alert gateway to allow an alert to be transmitted to
18 the alert gateway;
19 associate the at least one gateway characteristic for a particular alert
20 gateway with the distribution address for that particular alert gateway;
21 receive an alert via the at least one interface member, the alert having
22 associated information about the alert;
23 identify, based on the information about the alert, a set of selection
24 criteria for determining which of the plurality of alert gateways should receive the
25 alert;
26 search the directory for at least one directory entry comprising a
27 gateway characteristic corresponding to the identified selection criteria; and
28 identify, based on the search, a set of at least one distribution address
29 that should receive the alert, each member of the set of distribution addresses being
30 associated with a directory entry comprising a gateway characteristic that corresponds
31 to the identified selection criteria.

1 2. The device of claim 1, wherein the at least one gateway characteristic
2 associated with each of the alert gateways comprises information about the geographic
3 location of the alert gateway.

1 3. The device of claim 2, wherein the information about the alert
2 comprises geographic information about a geographic area to which the alert pertains, such
3 that subscribers outside the geographic area would be relatively unlikely to be interested in
4 receiving the alert.

1 4. The device of claim 1, wherein the directory entry for each alert
2 gateway comprises information about a distribution address for that alert gateway, and
3 wherein maintaining a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways
4 comprises maintaining the information about the distribution address.

1 5. The device of claim 1, wherein the storage medium comprises a first
2 database, the first database comprising the directory of alert gateways.

1 6. The device of claim 5, wherein storage medium comprises a second
2 database, the second database comprising the distribution addresses associated with each of
3 the alert gateways.

1 7. The device of claim 1, wherein the at least one gateway characteristic
2 associated with an alert gateway comprises information selected from the group consisting of
3 the area code in which the alert gateway is located, the ZIP code in which the alert gateway is
4 located, the latitude and longitude coordinates of the alert gateway, the Global Positioning
5 System coordinates of the alert gateway, demographic information about a subscriber
6 associated with the alert gateway, and information about subscriber preferences held by a
7 subscriber associated with the alert gateway.

1 8. The device of claim 1, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 9. The device of claim 8, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 10. The device of claim 1, wherein the information about the alert is
2 incorporated within the alert.

1 11. The device of claim 1, wherein the alert information about the alert is
2 additional to the alert.

1 12. The device of claim 1, wherein the storage medium comprises further
2 instructions executable by the processor to extract from the alert the information about the
3 alert.

1 13. The device of claim 1, wherein the communication network is selected
2 from a group consisting of a radio-frequency transmission, a telephone network, a cable
3 television distribution network, the Internet, a fiber-optic network, a high-speed data network,
4 a wireless network, and a microwave network.

1 14. The device of claim 1, wherein the communication network is a
2 plurality of communication networks and wherein, for a particular distribution address, the
3 device is configured to select the most appropriate communication network via which to
4 transmit the alert information to the particular distribution address.

1 15. In a relationship between a telecommunication provider and a plurality
2 of subscribers, a method for determining an appropriate set of addresses to which to distribute
3 an alert, the method comprising:

4 maintaining a directory of alert gateways, the directory comprising a plurality
5 of directory entries, each directory entry being associated with a particular alert gateway and
6 comprising at least one gateway characteristic associated with that alert gateway, the gateway
7 characteristic including information to enable the alert distribution device to determine
8 whether a given alert should be transmitted to the alert gateway;

9 maintaining a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways,
10 the distribution address for a particular alert gateway providing sufficient identifying
11 information about that alert gateway to allow an alert to be transmitted to the alert gateway;

12 associating the at least one gateway characteristic for a particular alert
13 gateway with the distribution address for that particular alert gateway;

14 receiving an alert, the alert having associated information about the alert;

15 identifying, based on the information about the alert, a set of selection criteria
16 for determining which of the plurality of alert gateways should receive the alert;
17 searching the directory for at least one directory entry comprising a gateway
18 characteristic corresponding to the identified selection criteria; and
19 identifying, based on the search, a set of at least one distribution address that
20 should receive the alert, each member of the set of distribution addresses being associated
21 with a directory entry comprising a gateway characteristic that corresponds to the identified
22 selection criteria.

1 16. The method of claim 15, wherein the at least one gateway
2 characteristic associated with each of the alert gateways comprises information about the
3 geographic location of the alert gateway.

1 17. The method of claim 16, wherein the information about the alert
2 comprises geographic information about a geographic area to which the alert pertains, such
3 that subscribers outside the geographic area would be relatively unlikely to be interested in
4 receiving the alert.

1 18. The method of claim 15, wherein the directory entry for each alert
2 gateway comprises information about a distribution address for that alert gateway, and
3 wherein maintaining a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways
4 comprises maintaining the information about the distribution address.

1 19. The method of claim 15, wherein the directory of alert gateways
2 comprises a first database.

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the distribution address associated
2 with each of the alert gateways are maintained in a second database.

1 21. The method of claim 15, wherein the at least one gateway
2 characteristic associated with an alert gateway comprises information selected from the group
3 consisting of the area code in which the alert gateway is located, the ZIP code in which the
4 alert gateway is located, the latitude and longitude coordinates of the alert gateway, the
5 Global Positioning System coordinates of the alert gateway, demographic information about a
6 subscriber associated with the alert gateway, and information about subscriber preferences
7 held by a subscriber associated with the alert gateway.

1 22. The method of claim 15, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 23. The method of claim 8, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 24. The method of claim 15, wherein the information about the alert is
2 incorporated within the alert.

1 25. The method of claim 15, wherein the alert information about the alert
2 is additional to the alert.

1 26. The method of claim 15, further comprising extracting from the alert
2 the information about the alert.

1 27. In a relationship between a telecommunication provider and a plurality
2 of subscribers, a system for distributing an alert to an appropriate set of subscribers, the
3 system comprising:

4 a plurality of alert gateways configured to receive an alert, each of the
5 plurality of alert gateways being associated with at least one subscriber;

6 a communication network in communication with the plurality of alert
7 gateways; and

8 an alert distribution device in communication with the communication
9 network, the alert distribution device comprising:

10 at least one interface member in communication with the network;

11 a processor in communication with the at least one interface member;

12 and

13 a storage medium in communication with the processor, the storage
14 medium comprising instructions executable by the processor to:

15 maintain a directory of alert gateways, the directory comprising

16 a plurality of directory entries, each directory entry being associated with a
17 particular alert gateway and comprising at least one gateway characteristic
18 associated with that alert gateway, the gateway characteristic including

information to enable the alert distribution device to determine whether a given alert should be transmitted to the alert gateway;

maintain a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways, the distribution address for a particular alert gateway providing sufficient identifying information about that alert gateway to allow an alert to be transmitted to the alert gateway;

associate the at least one gateway characteristic for a particular alert gateway with the distribution address for that particular alert gateway;

receive an alert via the at least one interface member, the alert having associated information about the alert;

identify, based on the information about the alert, a set of selection criteria for determining which of the plurality of alert gateways should receive the alert;

search the directory for at least one directory entry comprising a gateway characteristic corresponding to the identified selection criteria;

identify, based on the search, a set of at least one distribution address that should receive the alert, each member of the set of distribution addresses being associated with a directory entry comprising a gateway characteristic that corresponds to the identified selection criteria; and

using the at least one interface member, transmit the alert via the network to a set of alert gateways, each member of the set of alert gateways being associated with a member of the set of distribution addresses.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the at least one gateway characteristic associated with each of the alert gateways comprises information about the geographic location of the alert gateway.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the information about the alert comprises geographic information about a geographic area to which the alert pertains, such that subscribers outside the geographic area would be relatively unlikely to be interested in receiving the alert.

30. The system of claim 27, wherein the directory entry for each alert gateway comprises information about a distribution address for that alert gateway, and

3 wherein maintaining a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways
4 comprises maintaining the information about the distribution address.

1 31. The system of claim 27, wherein the storage medium comprises a first
2 database, the first database comprising the directory of alert gateways.

1 32. The system of claim 31, wherein storage medium comprises a second
2 database, the second database comprising the distribution addresses associated with each of
3 the alert gateways.

1 33. The system of claim 27, wherein the at least one gateway characteristic
2 associated with an alert gateway comprises information selected from the group consisting of
3 the area code in which the alert gateway is located, the ZIP code in which the alert gateway is
4 located, the latitude and longitude coordinates of the alert gateway, the Global Positioning
5 System coordinates of the alert gateway, demographic information about a subscriber
6 associated with the alert gateway, and information about subscriber preferences held by a
7 subscriber associated with the alert gateway.

1 34. The system of claim 27, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is incorporated within a network interface device.

1 35. The system of claim 27, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is in communication with a network interface device.

1 36. The system of claim 27, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 37. The system of claim 36, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 38. The system of claim 27, wherein the information about the alert is
2 incorporated within the alert.

1 39. The system of claim 27, wherein the alert information about the alert is
2 additional to the alert.

1 40. The system of claim 27, wherein the storage medium comprises further
2 instructions executable by the processor to extract from the alert the information about the
3 alert.

1 41. The system of claim 27, wherein the communication network is
2 selected from a group consisting of a radio-frequency transmission, a telephone network, a
3 cable television distribution network, the Internet, a fiber-optic network, a high-speed data
4 network, a wireless network, and a microwave network.

1 42. The system of claim 27, wherein the communication network is a
2 plurality of communication networks and wherein, for a particular distribution address, the
3 alert distribution device is configured to select the most appropriate communication network
4 via which to transmit the alert information to the particular distribution address.

5 43. In a relationship between a telecommunication provider and a plurality
6 of subscribers, a system for distributing an alert to an appropriate set of subscribers, the
7 system comprising:

8 a plurality of alert gateways configured to receive an alert, each of the
9 plurality of alert gateways having a geographic location, and each of the plurality of alert
10 gateways being associated with at least one subscriber;

11 a network configured to provide communication with the plurality of alert
12 gateways; and

13 an alert distribution device comprising:

14 at least one interface member in communication with the network;

15 a processor in communication with the at least one interface member;

16 and

17 a storage medium in communication with the processor, the storage
18 medium comprising instructions executable by the processor to:

19 maintain a database of alert gateways, the database comprising
20 a plurality of database records, each database record being associated with an
21 alert gateway and comprising location information about the geographic
22 location of that alert gateway;

23 maintain a distribution address associated with each of the alert
24 gateways, the distribution address for an alert gateway providing sufficient

25 identifying information about that alert gateway to allow an alert to be
26 transmitted to the alert gateway;
27 associate the at least one gateway characteristic for a particular
28 alert gateway with the distribution address for that particular alert gateway;
29 receive an alert via the at least one interface member, the alert
30 comprising information about a geographic area to which the alert pertains,
31 such that subscribers outside the geographic area would be relatively unlikely
32 to be interested in receiving the alert;
33 identify, based on the information about the geographic area to
34 which the alert pertains, a set of geographic criteria for determining which of
35 the plurality of alert gateways should receive the alert;
36 search the database for at least one directory entry comprising
37 location information meeting the set of geographic criteria;
38 identify, based on the search, a set of at least one distribution
39 address that should receive the alert, each of the set of distribution addresses
40 associated with a directory entry comprising location information meeting the
41 set of geographic criteria; and
42 using the at least one interface member, transmit the alert via
43 the network to a set of alert gateways, each member of the set of alert
44 gateways being associated with a member of the set of distribution addresses.

1 44. The system of claim 43, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is incorporated within a network interface device.

1 45. The system of claim 43, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is in communication with a network interface device.

1 46. The system of claim 43, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 47. The system of claim 46, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.

1 48. The system of claim 43, wherein the location information is selected
2 from the group consisting of the area code in which the alert gateway is located, the ZIP code

3 in which the alert gateway is located, the latitude and longitude coordinates of the alert
4 gateway, and the Global Positioning System coordinates of the alert gateway.

1 49. In a relationship between a telecommunication provider and a plurality
2 of subscribers, a method for distributing an alert to an appropriate set of subscribers, the
3 method comprising:

4 maintaining a database of alert gateways, the database comprising a plurality
5 of database records, each database record being associated with an alert gateway and
6 comprising location information about the geographic location of that alert gateway;

7 maintaining a distribution address associated with each of the alert gateways,
8 the distribution address for an alert gateway providing sufficient identifying information
9 about that alert gateway to allow an alert to be transmitted to the alert gateway;

10 associating the at least one gateway characteristic for a particular alert
11 gateway with the distribution address for that particular alert gateway;

12 receiving an alert via the at least one interface member, the alert comprising
13 information about a geographic area to which the alert pertains, such that subscribers outside
14 the geographic area would be relatively unlikely to be interested in receiving the alert;

15 identifying, based on the information about the geographic area to which the
16 alert pertains, a set of geographic criteria for determining which of the plurality of alert
17 gateways should receive the alert;

18 searching the database for at least one directory entry comprising location
19 information meeting the set of geographic criteria;

20 identifying, based on the search, a set of at least one distribution address that
21 should receive the alert, each member of the set of distribution addresses being associated
22 with a directory entry comprising location information meeting the set of geographic criteria;
23 and

24 transmitting the alert to a set of alert gateways, each member of the set of alert
25 gateways being associated with a member of the set of distribution addresses.

1 50. The method of claim 49, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is incorporated within a network interface device.

1 51. The method of claim 49, wherein at least one of the plurality of alert
2 gateways is in communication with a network interface device.

1 52. The method of claim 49, wherein the location information is selected
2 from the group consisting of the area code in which the alert gateway is located, the ZIP code
3 in which the alert gateway is located, the latitude and longitude coordinates of the alert
4 gateway, and the Global Positioning System coordinates of the alert gateway.

1 53. The method of claim 49, wherein the alert comprises urgent public
2 information.

1 54. The method of claim 53, wherein the urgent public information is
2 selected from a group consisting of an Emergency Alert System transmission, an Amber
3 Alert, a severe weather notification, and a Homeland Security Advisory notification.